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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3252
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 0578
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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5212
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 0261
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000194

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: MINISTER SAYS USG SUPPORTS DOMESTIC SPYING

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) Summary: After a January 24 statement in which Police Commander Miguel Vasquez acknowledged that the police intelligence unit has been spying on politicians (mostly opposition) and journalists, the media have added a number of possible spying targets (the Catholic church, foreign embassies in La Paz). As has become a common Bolivian government response to domestic problems, the Morales administration has tried to implicate the USG, with Minister of Government Alfredo Rada discussing "suggestive" USG support to police groups in press interviews. For the moment, the government's actions are still being viewed as its own abuse of civil liberties, although we will monitor whether Rada's false accusations against the Embassy stick. End summary.

Government Minister Rada's Insinuations

¶2. (U) In an interview that received a front-page tease and full-page coverage, Minister of Government Rada declared that "at least two intelligence structures" had been found to be doing "irregular work." The Special Operations Command "Copes" was, according to Rada, created fifteen years ago with USG logistical support for training and technology. Rada insinuated, "...very curiously in January of 2006, shortly after Evo Morales took office, (Copes) changed its name to 'Organization of Police Studies,' an apparently innocent name. But we have discovered that the Copes continues operating through this other name. It is suggestive." Although clarifying that it would be "irrational" to reject U.S. support in all areas, Rada said, "What we question is the fact that it seems that there are structures that do intelligence work and it is not clear to whom they report and it is not clear what type of support they receive. In our investigation, we will establish what type of support is given...(and) revealing information will come out that will show that these parallel structures are a risk not only for the police but for the security of the state." In another interview, Rada added, "...Copes and some

other intelligence groups had logistical and training support from the American Embassy. It is inadmissible that there be foreign support for parallel intelligence groups that do not respond to the defined constitutional commands."

¶3. (U) Press reports also commented on another group within the national police that works with the Embassy: the security group in charge of the Embassy's security and roving police patrol. The article stated that the group "conducts intelligence work in a direct manner."

¶4. (U) Some observers are criticizing Minister of Government Rada for his self-confessed lack of control over these police entities. La Paz leading daily La Razon opines that it is "grave" that Rada says he has no control over intelligence groups, "since that is his responsibility, but graver still is that espionage is being committed and there are no sanctions."

Embassy Response

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¶5. (U) Our official response to Rada's accusations clarifies that the USG has for many years supported the Bolivian National Police in a number of areas. This support has always been provided with the knowledge and under the control of the Bolivian government, in cooperation with Bolivian government officials. We state that accusations of police spying on Bolivian citizens is an issue internal to the Bolivian government, which should be referred to the appropriate Bolivian authorities.

Comment- - - -

¶6. (C) Minister Rada's unsubstantiated insinuations seem designed to distract attention from accusations that the government is spying on the opposition and media. At a time when the government is receiving bad press for its slow response to natural disasters, we may anticipate more anti-USG rhetoric in attempts to distract attention from domestic problems. As when initial accusations against USAID were followed by press-conferences detailing "interference" and when a picture of the Ambassador with a bystander at a trade fair was spun into a "conspiracy," Rada's promised investigations of Bolivia's internal espionage scandal may result in extended USG-bashing. End comment.
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